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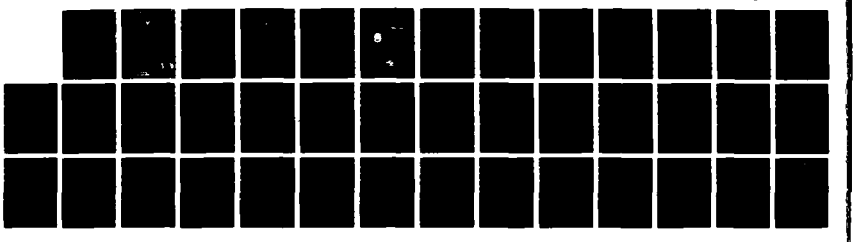
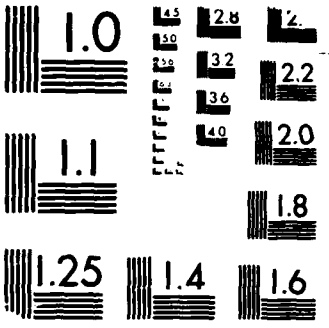
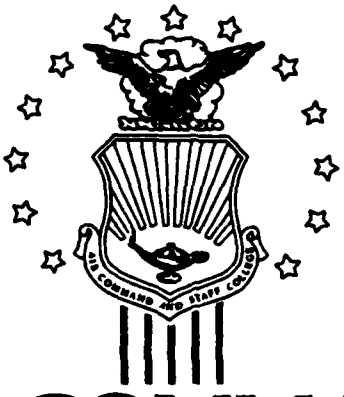






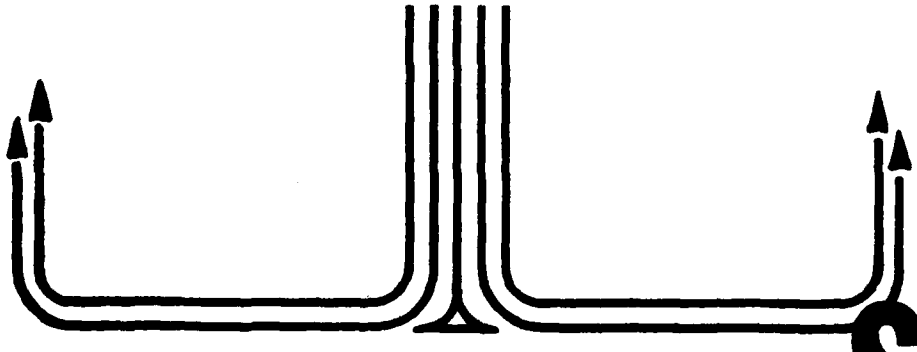
AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

STUDENT REPORT

THE 33rd FIGHTER GROUP
"FIRE FROM THE CLOUDS"

MAJOR ROBERT T. COOPER RPT#88-0600

"insights into tomorrow"



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TITLE THE 33rd FIGHTER GROUP
"FIRE FROM THE CLOUDS"

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

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The 33rd Fighter Group was a World War II Army Air Force P-40 unit that flew bomber escort, fighter sweep, defensive combat air patrol, and air-to-ground missions from a series of austere bases in Algeria, Tunisia, Pantelleria, Sicily, and Italy. This paper looks at the history of the 33rd Fighter Group during the time frame from January 1941 to February 1944. The purpose of the paper is to look at some of the problems the 33rd faced in the areas of training, logistics, and tactics and examine how the 33rd solved the problems.

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THE 33rd FIGHTER GROUP
"FIRE FROM THE CLOUDS"

58th
FIGHTER SQUADRON

59th
FIGHTER SQUADRON

60th
FIGHTER SQUADRON

PREFACE

The 33rd Fighter Group was a newly formed group that played a large role in World War II. The 33rd flew P-40's throughout North Africa and up into Italy. The group was always right behind the front line, moving as it moved. The 33rd was faced with many hardships and many problems, but always seemed to overcome them and carry on its mission. The efforts of the 33rd contributed much to the success of the Allies in Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy.

This paper's purpose is to look at some of the problems the 33rd faced in the areas of training, logistics, and tactics and examine how the 33rd solved the problems. By learning from the past, it may be possible to take action to prevent the same problems in the future. This paper also provides an overview of the early fighter heritage of the 33rd Fighter Group. The author hopes this study will inspire fellow airmen to conduct research and gain appreciation of the heritage of other Fighter Groups.

It would have been impossible to complete this project without the help of others. The author is indebted to several individuals for assistance. Former 59th Fighter Squadron's James E. Reed was kind enough to answer many questions the author had during several phone interviews. Mr. Reed also sent the author a copy of his book, The Fighting 33rd Nomads, which included a copy of his personal diary and many personal photographs. I would highly recommend this book to anyone interested in reading more about the early history of the 33rd. Colonel Richard A. Emmons, USAF, Retired; Lieutenant Colonel I. M. Beaty, USAF, Retired; and Lieutenant Colonel William D. Jones, USAF, Retired, were all former members of the 33rd Fighter Group and were nice enough to take an afternoon off to be interviewed by the author. The information these individuals provided was extremely helpful. Much of the material is due to the conscientious work and excellent writing of all the unit historians of the 33rd from January 1941 until February 1944. From the ACSC staff Major Thomas D. Miller provided guidance and encouragement throughout the project's development. Finally, the author is grateful to Mr. Harry Fletcher and the staff at the Air Force Historical Research Center, Maxwell AFB, for their valuable assistance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Robert T. Cooper entered the Air Force through Officer Training School in 1974 and completed navigator training in 1975. After attending F-4 training, he received an assignment to the 59th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing, Eglin AFB, Florida as a Weapon Systems Officer in the F-4E Phantom. In 1978, he was selected for pilot training and upon completion in 1979, received an assignment to Mather AFB, California to fly T-37 training aircraft. In 1982, he was assigned to Dover AFB, Delaware to fly C-5 transport aircraft. Major Cooper spent three years flying the MAC line before being assigned to Altus AFB, Oklahoma to instruct copilot, aircraft commander, and instructor candidates at MAC's C-5 formal training school. He is currently a student at the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

Major Cooper holds a Master's Degree in Education from Chapman College, Orange, California. His professional military education includes Squadron Officer School by correspondence, Marine Command and Staff by correspondence, and Air Command and Staff by seminar.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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"insights into tomorrow"

REPORT NUMBER 88-0600

AUTHOR(S) MAJOR ROBERT T. COOPER, USAF

TITLE THE 33rd FIGHTER GROUP
"FIRE FROM THE CLOUDS"

I. Purpose: To look at lessons learned from the 33rd Fighter Group, during World War II, in the areas of training, logistics, and tactics for application in future conflicts.

II. Problem: Although modern technology has changed the weapons and the way we will fight future wars, it is still possible to apply lessons from the past to future conflicts. Acceptance of this fact mandates more study of the past so as to not repeat the same mistakes.

III. Data: The 33rd went on to operate in the China-Burma-India Theater after February 1944, but for the purpose of this paper, only the time frame from January 1941 to February 1944 will be used. The 33rd Fighter Group was one of many groups formed during the rapid expansion of the Army Air Corps just prior to World War II. During the training phase prior to World War II, it was never invisioned that the ground crews would be part of an amphibious attack force and the pilots would be catapulted from an aircraft carrier into battle. Trained or not, when the need arose, the 33rd did what had to be done. Replacement pilots received even less training than the original cadre, so it was necessary to continue to train these replacements in the combat arena. One advantage of this was that it allowed the replacements

to be taught the tactics they would need to use against the enemy they would be flying against. The disadvantage was that inexperienced pilots were going up against experienced German pilots. The amount of training available to replacements was limited due to the shortage of supplies, but the largest shortfall was in airplanes. Replacement pilots arrived faster than replacement airplanes. Even though the airplanes were limited, the 33rd was able to fly the required missions. This took a great deal of hard work and many long hours on the part of the ground crews, but their ingenuity made up for the shortage of supplies. When the 33rd first went into combat, tactics were learned through trial and error, resulting in many loses. However, replacement pilots were taught proper tactics prior to flying. With their lack of training and experience this knowledge was necessary for their survival.

IV. Conclusions: Since the Armed Forces always draw down after a war, we will be faced with the some of the same conditions the 33rd was faced with in the event of a future war. A major conflict will require a mass build-up and rapid deployment of troops. The problems of the past have to be studied if the problems are to be avoided in the future. Since the same problems of training, logistics, and tactics will be faced in future conflicts, we need to examine our current policies and procedures to see if they will work during a rapid build-up and deployment. If changes need to be made, then they should be made now so we can practice the way we are really going to do it.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The 33rd Fighter Group, originally the 33rd Pursuit Group, was created on January 15, 1941. The original cadre of personnel was transferred in from the 8th Pursuit Group and the first commanding officer was Lt. George W. Hazlett. P-39's were the first aircraft the unit flew, but they were soon exchanged for P-40's. (9:1) The creation of the 33rd was part of a massive build-up of the Army Air Corps in the United States. This build-up was a result of the vital role air power played in the German offense and in the British defense. (1:103)

The 33rd trained and operated in the United States until October 1942. Originally chosen to fulfill a request for more air power in the Middle East, General Eisenhower made the decision to change the destination. At the request for more air power by General Doolittle, Commander of the newly formed 12th Air Force, General Eisenhower decided to redirect the 33rd Fighter Group. Their destination was changed from Cairo, Egypt to Casablanca, Morocco. (2:23) Although the 33rd will operate in many locations throughout World War II, it is in North Africa that they will fight the hardest, in the worst conditions, and with the most inexperienced personnel.

This paper examines the role of the 33rd Fighter Group in World War II, from January 1941 to February 1944, with special emphasis on the group's training, tactics and logistics. The purpose of this paper is to study the 33rd's training, tactics, and logistics used during the war for lessons learned for use in future conflicts. In so doing, this paper will also provide an overview of the early fighter heritage of the 33rd Fighter Group.

Chapter Two is intended to place the 33rd into the larger context of World War II in Europe. It briefly discusses the events leading up to the American involvement in the war and then looks at the strategy in Europe. Part of this strategy is to open a second front in Africa. The second front is where the 33rd will do most of its fighting.

Chapter Three is a chronological history of the 33rd preparing for war. It briefly addresses the training and operation of the 33rd in the United States prior to deploying to Africa.

Chapter Four takes the Group from the United States to Morocco. It discusses the invasion of Morocco and the role of the 33rd. It provides a transition from friendly surroundings to war, and sets the stage for future events.

Chapter Five discusses the operations in Tunisia. This will be the most dangerous area of operation for the 33rd. The living conditions, supply problems, and tactics will be studied in this chapter. There are many lessons to be learned from the 33rd and many of them come from the first five months in Africa, most of which were spent in Tunisia.

Chapter Six discusses the role the group played in Pantelleria, Sicily and Italy. Air superiority had been achieved by this point and the skies were safer than they had been in Tunisia. This chapter does not go into great depth, but does briefly summarize the action of the 33rd during the remainder of the time spent in the Mediterranean Theater of Operation.

Chapter Seven offers some lessons to be learned from the operation of the 33rd during World War II. A summary of the training, tactical and logistical problems encountered by the 33rd is provided and solutions to these problems are discussed.

The appendix shows all the air-to-air victories of the 33rd by squadrons and lists the personnel lost during the war in the time frame studied.

Chapter Two

ROLE OF THE 33rd IN NORTH AFRICA

World War II began on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. (6:380) Although most of the people in the United States did not want to go to war, they did hope for an Allied victory. Some Americans thought the United States should help the Allies as much as possible without actually going to war, while others thought the United States should remain isolated. The president announced the neutrality of the United States, but everyone suspected that at some point the United States would be drawn into World War II. (6:389)

After the invasion of Poland, the Nazi regime spread over Europe like a fatal cancer. Germany crushed Poland, Denmark, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, and France. By 1940, the only country left to prevent the further spread of this malignancy was Great Britain. Britain had sent troops to aid France, but the combined forces were still not strong enough to stop the powerful German war machine. The British retreated to the French seaport of Dunkerque on the English Channel and were saved by one of the greatest rescue missions of the war. "The rescue fleet included destroyers, yachts, ferries, fishing vessels, and motorboats. Under heavy bombardment, the vessels evacuated about 338,000 troops from May 26 to June 4." (6:385) Although most of the army was saved, it was weakened because it had left much of its war fighting equipment behind. Germany thought Great Britain would seek peace after the fall of France, but when it did not, Hitler decided to use the might of the German war machine to gain control of Britain. Hitler knew he would need air superiority to cross the channel, so the Luftwaffe was sent into action over Britain in August 1940. (6:387)

Around the same time as the Battle of Britain, the Italians opened fronts in Africa and in 1941, Hitler sent tank units, known as the Africa Korps, led by General Erwin Rommel, to help the Italians in northern Africa. The Germans also invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941 under the code name of Operation Barbarossa. (6:389) Even though the United States could see the German disease spreading further and further, the decision to remain neutral remained

intact. It was not until the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 that the United States decided to enter the war. (6:390)

Once in the war, the United States adopted an air strategy of daylight precision bombing in the European Theater of Operation. The American forces suffered large losses and Germany continued to bomb Britain. The United States wanted to mass for a cross-channel invasion into France, but Britain, still recovering from the Battle of Britain, argued to open a second front in Africa. By opening a second front in Africa, it would force Germany to spread its forces out. This would take pressure off of Russia and give Britain time to rebuild its air force. The second front would also prevent Hitler from gaining access to the oil fields in the Middle East or linking his forces with Japanese forces in India. As a result of Britain's persistence, operation TORCH was born. TORCH was the code name for the invasion of North Africa.

The ground forces of the 33rd Fighter Group will participate in TORCH as part of the initial amphibious invasion force. The P-40's will fly into Morocco two days after the invasion and provide air support for ground forces throughout the North African Theater of Operation and later in the Mediterranean Theater of Operation.

Chapter Three

PREPARING FOR WAR

"In May, 1941, the 33rd under Capt. Charles L. Robbins went to Louisiana for its first ten day maneuvers." (9:1) According to Major John A. Woodworth, the early days of organization reflected the almost experimental nature of the plans for manning and equipping a compact, hard-hitting combat air team. The concept of how to organize such units was continually changing as Germany unfolded her mighty air armada to the startled world. At the completion of the maneuvers, the unit returned to Mitchel Field and Major Minthorne W. Reed assumed command of the Group. (9:1) Major Reed remained in command of the Group until October 6, 1941, when Major Elwood R. Quesada assumed command. (9:1) He was in command when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The next day, the United States declared war and the three squadrons (58th, 59th, and 60th) of the 33rd Pursuit Group moved to various locations in the United States. (13:3)

The 58th moved to Farmingdale, Long Island, N.Y. and the 60th went to Bolling Field, Washington D.C. These two squadrons had fairly good facilities and normal problems. "The 59th Pursuit Squadron at Groton, Connecticut occupied a small grassy field and quartered in an abandoned farm house, using a large dairy building as the mess hall." (13:3) Although the members of the squadron did not know it at the time, this experience was good training for things to come. Later, the 58th moved to Philadelphia, Pa. and then to Norfolk, Va. while the 59th moved to Millville, N.J. (9:1) In the move to Millville, N.J., the 59th tested a new concept, dividing the squadron into three different groups for the move.

It is important to know the composition of the groups, so as not to be confused later. The flight echelon consisted of the pilots and the planes. The air echelon was a small group of ground personnel consisting of the minimum people necessary to carry on flight operations. The ground echelon consisted of everyone else and all the heavy equipment. This organization allowed the Group to move quickly and continue operating while on the move. (21:--)

During the 59th's move, the air echelon, a small quick moving group, went in first to prepare the base for the combat troops. Next, the flight echelon came in with the planes and started operating. The ground echelon came in last with the remainder of the equipment and personnel. The move was highly successful and this procedure was used again to move the 58th to San Francisco, California and the 59th to Paine Field, Washington.

The 58th and 59th were sent to the west coast in May 1942, to replace squadrons sent to Alaska to defend against the threat posed by the Japanese fleet. (13:5) During this move, Major Charles L. Robbins, the Group Operations Officer, was killed at Charlotte, North Carolina, and two pilots died from the cold water and high waves after an aircraft accident caused them to bail out in the Pacific Ocean. (13:5) In June, 1942, both squadrons returned to the east coast with the 58th going to Norfolk, Va. and the 59th to Philadelphia, Pa. "At this time Col. Quesada assumed command of the Philadelphia Air Defense Wing, and Major William W. Momyer became Group Commander." (9:1) At this time the 33rd, having reached maturity, became a parent organization and provided the initial cadre for the 324th, 327th, and 353rd Fighter Groups.

With maturity comes combat, and the 33rd was getting closer to an overseas deployment. On October 12, 1942, the air echelon moved to Langley Field, Va. and on October 14 personnel boarded ships for deployment overseas. After some maneuvering in the Chesapeake Bay, they set sail for North Africa on October 23, 1942. After moving to Fort Dix, New Jersey on October 19, the ground echelon set sail on November 2, 1942. (9:1) "The stage was set. The time had arrived for the proving of our mettle, we were embarked for the invasion of Morocco." (13:7)

Chapter Four

THE INVASION OF MOROCCO

Initially, the 33rd Fighter Group was allocated to the U.S. Army Middle East Air Forces in Egypt. The 33rd was to arrive in the Middle East by October 1, 1942. In September, Brig. Gen. James H. Doolittle, commanding the Twelfth Air Corps, requested the 33rd be turned over to him for use in French Morocco. General Eisenhower, as the TORCH commander, made the final decision and the destination of the 33rd was changed from Egypt to Casablanca. (2:25)

The 33rd Fighter Group was commanded by Major William W. Momyer, the 58th by Major Robert H. Christman, the 59th by Major Mark E. Hubbard, and the 60th by Major Franklin W. Horton. (13:7) "For the first time in military history, the P-40's of our Group were to take part in combat operations from an aircraft carrier." (13:9) The P-40's, along with the flight echelon, were placed upon the deck of the small carrier, the U.S.S. Chenango. The rest of the group was dispersed among different ships in case of sinking. The air echelon of the 58th was on the U.S.S. Susan B. Anthony and the air echelon of the 59th and 60th were on the U.S.S. Anne Arundel. The remaining support personnel of the air echelon were on the U.S.S. Florence Nightingale. The ground echelon would follow ten days later on the U.S.S. Monterey. (15:4)

On November 3, 1942, less than 800 miles from French Morocco, one of the officers aboard the U.S.S. Florence Nightingale saw some dark clouds to the northeast and commented, "We'll get rain after all." (13:9) When the ship's executive officer, standing nearby, heard this remark, he smiled faintly and said, "We'll get rained on by the end of the week, but it won't be with water." (13:10) Shortly after that remark, on November 6, the following memorandum was distributed to the personnel of the ship;

U.S.S. FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE (AP-70)

NOVEMBER 6, 1942

MEMORANDUM TO ALL HANDS:

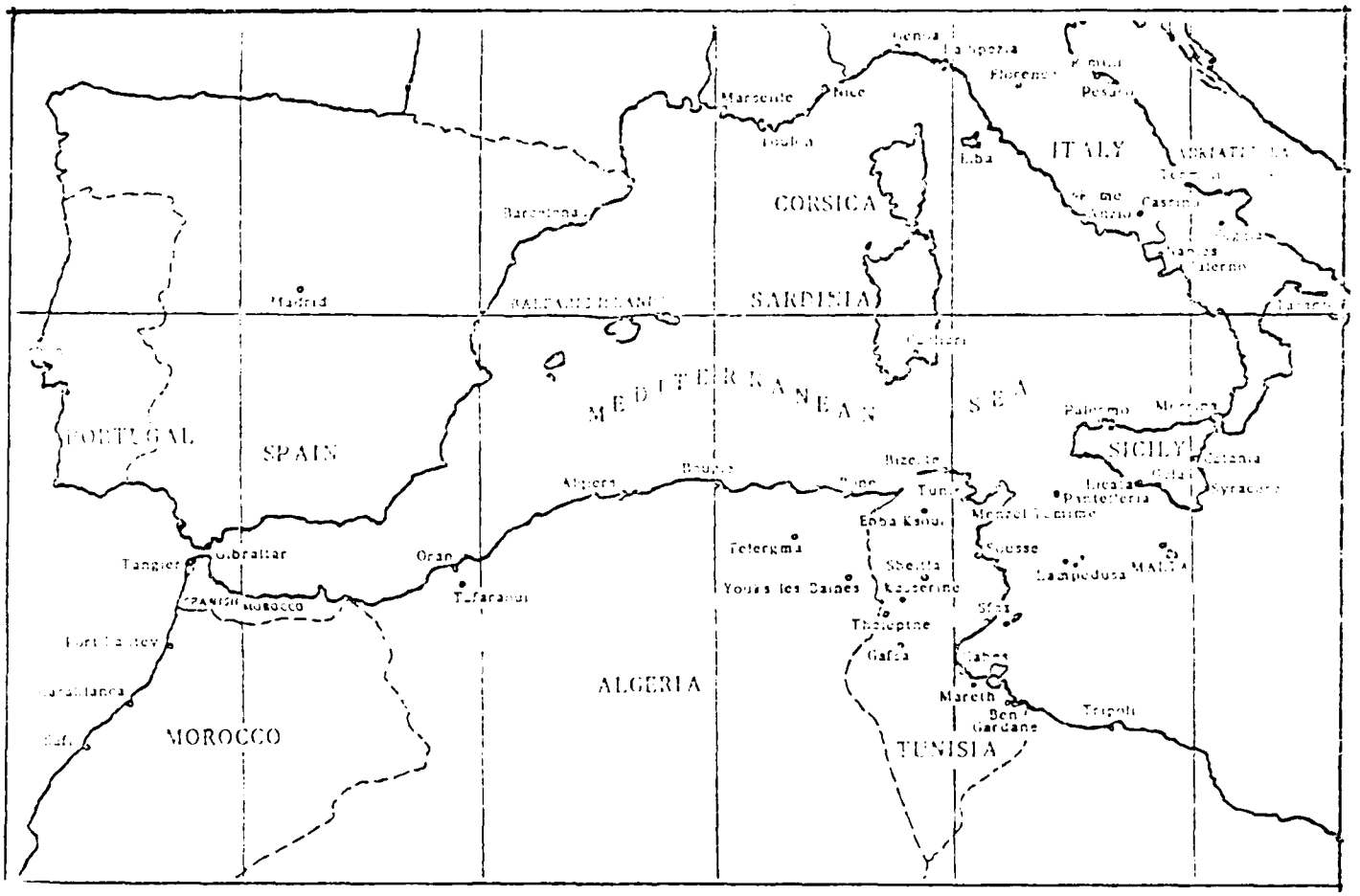

Figure 1. Map of North Africa.
From THE FIGHTING 3rd NOMADS, by James E. Reed.

1. THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE COMMANDER TASK GROUP:

"WE ARE ABOUT TO EMBARK UPON A MOST DIFFICULT AND HISTORICAL TASK, THE OPENING OF A SECOND FRONT IN AFRICA. OUR PEOPLE BACK HOME AND THE ENTIRE UNITED NATIONS WILL WATCH US WITH CONSUMING INTEREST. DON'T LET THEM DOWN. TO SUCCESSFULLY CARRY OFF OUR TASK WE MUST LIVE UP TO THE GLORIOUS TRADITION OF THE NAVY WHICH WILL REQUIRE THE UTMOST FROM ALL HANDS AND DUTY BEYOND THE USUAL CALL. THIS CALL IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO STRIKE A BLOW FOR AMERICA AND FOR OUR ALLIES. LET US BE READY TO GIVE THE ENEMY HELL WHEN AND WHEREVER HE SHOWS HIMSELF. MAKE EVERY SHOT COUNT."

C.M. GREGSON,
Lt. Comdr., USNR
Executive Officer. (13:10)

On November 8, 1942, "D-Day" for Operation TORCH had arrived. The air echelon was up at 0330 on the U.S.S. Susan B. Anthony and the U.S.S. Anne Arundel. At 0535 assault waves began to leave the ships. (15:3) Other members of the air echelon watched from the deck of the U.S.S. Florence Nightingale as the hostilities commenced at about 0600. Friendly shells could be seen bursting over the shore as enemy shells began to fall around the ship. (13:11) Major Woodworth stated, "The naval gunfire was marvelous to behold. The rapidity of fire with the great belches of fire and smoke and the echoing thunder of the cannon were unbelievable." Naval planes from a carrier in the Task Group, were the first to give air support. (13:11) On November 10, 1942 the P-40's of the 33rd Fighter Group took off from the U.S.S. Chenango, just off the coast of Morocco, due east of Casablanca. (See Figure 1) Led by Lt. Col. Momyer, seventy-seven P-40's were catapulted off the carrier with a destination of Port Lyautey, French Morocco, North Africa. One P-40, piloted by Lt. Jones, crashed into the sea after takeoff and one flew into the fog and was never heard of again. The seventy-five remaining P-40's made it to their landing field, but seventeen aircraft were damaged on landing due to shell and bomb holes and the muddy conditions of the field. (12:5) Major Horton was injured when his aircraft flipped over on its back during the landing and so Major Henry ("Hank") Norman assumed command of the 60th on November 12. (13:12)

On November 15, the Group Headquarters, the 59th, and the 60th moved to the Cazes Airdrome at Casablanca while the

58th remained at Port Lyautey. (13:14) Shortly after this move, thirty-four replacement pilots, under the command of Major Phillip Cochran, flew off the H.M.S. Archer and went to Rabat. This squadron was nicknamed the Joker Squadron because it did not have a definite designation. It was assigned to the 33rd for training and to provide replacements for the Group. (13:15) On November 19, the ground echelon arrived and the Group was once again a complete unit.

With the main opposition surpressed and the armistice declared, the operation had been a great success. The air echelon had gone in with the first wave of an amphibious assault, had been shelled, straffed, and shot at, and had secured a landing field for the P-40's. The flight echelon had taken off of a carrier for the first time and arrived with seventy-five of the seventy-seven aircraft. The ground echelon arrived on time and the unit was together once again, thousands of miles from the United States and ready to go into action against the Germans in Tunisia.

Chapter Five

TUNISIA

The P-40's were repaired and the personnel were well rested after the long sea voyage and the invasion of Morocco, so it was time to get on with the war. On December 4, 1942, Lt. Col. Momyer started toward Thelepte, Tunisia with a small composite squadron taken from the 58th and 60th squadrons. (13:17) The small composite squadron would operate out of Youks-Les-Bains for about a week while enroute to Thelepte. (See Figure 2) Thelepte, about forty miles from the front, was the most advanced air field on the Tunisian front. On December 5, the rest of the 58th Squadron's flight echelon departed Port Lyautey for Youks-Les-Bains. (14:57) The 58th's ground echelon was transported to Youks-Les-Bains, Algeria by train and then to Thelepte by truck. (14:59) The air echelon flew into Thelepte on C-47's.

It is at Youks-Les-Bains on December 7, the anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, that the 33rd Fighter Group loses its first pilot to combat. Lt. Bowser of the 60th Squadron is brought down by flak while flying a reconnaisance mission over Gabes, a coastal shipping center held by the Germans. (14:58) Two days later, the 33rd evened up the score. Lt. Charles B. Poillion took off to engage two Junkers-88(JU-88) bombers that came flying across the field. The men on the ground watched in groups and were cheering. They attempted, by radio, to guide Lt. Poillion to the bombers who where playing hide-and-seek among the clouds. Lt. Poillion found them and fired long bursts towards them. (14:59) The victory was confirmed the next day when the twisted and wrecked JU-88 was found seven miles from the field. (14:60) This was only the first of many victories for the 33rd.

On December 11, the P-40's were flown to Thelepte and a small detachment of 58th mechanics were transported from Youks-Les-Bains to Thelepte by truck. (14:60) The next day, without benefit of communications or planned strategy, "the officers of the 33rd, forming their own on-the-cuff maneuvers, strike for what they can find." (14:62) Because of the great distance the unit has to travel and the lack of

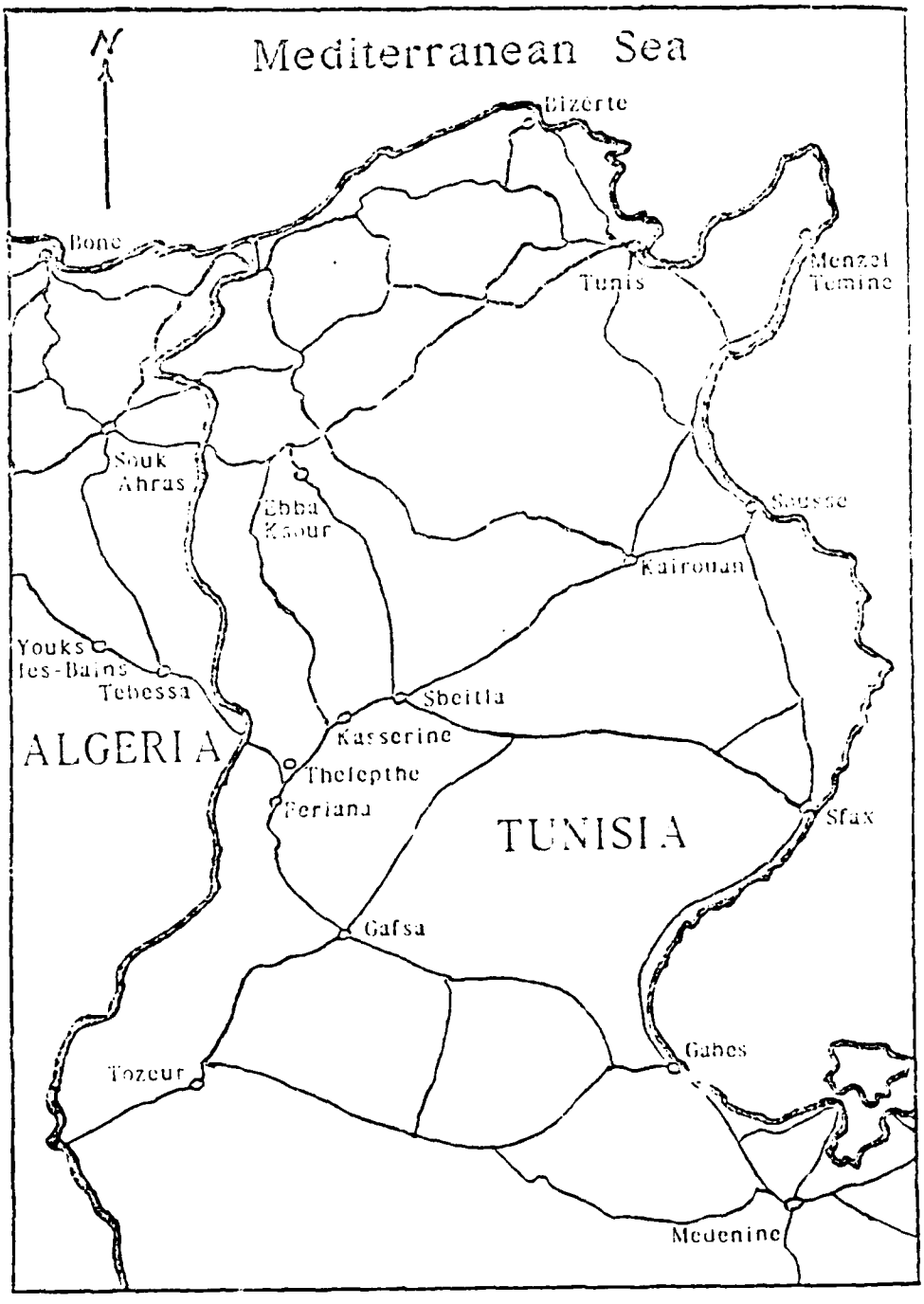

Figure 2. Map of Tunisia.
From THE FIGHTING 33rd NOMADS, by James E. Reed.

adequate transportation, it will take several days for the rest of the squadron to arrive at Thelepte. During this time, the scarcity of personnel at Thelepte makes it necessary for the 58th's mechanics to work on the field during the day and stand guard during the night. (14:62) During the second night, Major Christman yells for everyone to scatter as a JU-88 flies over the field. The bomber is over the field for a long second and then it circles out above the field in the dusk. The sound of exploding bombs is heard in the distance. (14:62) Thelepte is nothing like the secure, comfortable, well supplied training bases back in the United States. It is cold, uncomfortable, isolated, and close to the front with a shortage of mechanics, pilots, planes, replacement parts, tools, warm clothes and many other things, but the 33rd will continue to operate here and provide valuable support to the front line forces.

Major Phillip Cochran, who had come to North Africa with the Joker Squadron, flew to Thelepte and became the acting Commanding Officer. Major Cochran was a college student at Ohio State University and an Air Corps flier since 1933. He received his commission in 1937 and flew for a year with the 8th Pursuit Group. (14:63) The unit has heard great stories of Major Cochran's ability as a pilot, but he is probably even more famous as the living model of "Major Flip Corkin" in the comic strip "Terry and the Pirates." The artist, Milt Caniff, and Major Cochran were college mates and when Caniff conceived the idea for his story, he used his friend as his hero. (16:17)

Thelepte was a remote field with very limited facilities and no communications. Because of this and the lack of a planned strategy, Maj. Cochran had to take the initiative and determine where and what kind of missions were to be flown and what tactics would be used. With no guidance to do otherwise, it would have been easy to sit and wait for the supplies and personnel to arrive at Thelepte, but the 33rd came to fight, not to sit. Maj. Cochran planned a continuing air attack, chopping away at the Germans to keep them off balance. (14:63) He told the two squadrons of advance men of the 58th and 60th, that the first air echelon arriving at Thelepte would remain and continue operations with him. The other squadron would operate out of Youks-Les-Bains. (14:63) The 58th air echelon arrived first so they remained to operate out of Thelepte, the closest air base to the Germans in all of North Africa. (14:64) The Flight Echelon had been operating for three days with minimum support personnel and supplies. The air echelon arrived three days after the flight echelon and the ground echelon arrived three days after the air echelon. During the six days it took to get all the supplies and personnel

to Thelepte, the squadron continued to operate effectively. This can be attributed to the realistic training the unit had received in the United States. (14:63)

The Germans continued bombing Thelepte and with each successful strike, destroyed valuable supplies, airplanes, and personnel of the 58th. The airplanes and personnel are irreplaceable and supplies are slow in coming because of the great distance they must travel. The 58th does not have a radar or warning network, so all they can do is try to get airplanes off the ground when they hear bombers coming. Unfortunately, the bombers are usually able to get their bombs off before they are intercepted. Due to the remoteness of the base and the success of the bombers, supplies are always short, and damaged P-40's become the source for spare parts. (23:--)

The 58th had arrived in Africa with enough supplies to last approximately two months. In addition to this, the Joker Squadron had been sent as replacement planes and pilots. In the planning stages of TORCH, it was anticipated that a large number of planes would be lost between the carriers and the landing field. The Joker Squadron was intended to replenish these losses. Since the losses from the carriers were not nearly as high as anticipated, the Joker Squadron was held in reserve at Port Lyautey, training and gaining experience, while waiting to be sent to the front. Because of the two months worth of supplies and the extra airplanes and pilots, the 58th was able to continue operating at the front. On December 20th, the 58th received ten new pilots and airplanes from the Joker Squadron, which had been broken up and absorbed into the 33rd Group. (14:69)

Although good planning provided for two months worth of supplies, extra planes, and pilots, it did not plan on the friction that often comes with war. The 59th Squadron, which was held in reserve at Casablanca, was told to train the French in their P-40's. On December 21, the squadron transferred the airplanes to the French. "An order was issued by the Base Commander which required all units to form on the ramp in front of the hangers for the purpose of witnessing the departure of the French Squadron." (15:14) The next day Col. Beam, Commander of the Western Moroccan Composite Wing, said the transfer of our planes was a political move and was "one of extreme importance to the cause of the United Nations." (15:15) Important or not, it had a great ill effect on the morale of the 59th personnel and on the already short supplies.

At Thelepte, the 58th continued to fly a variety of missions against the Germans while the Germans continued to

bomb the field. On December 24, a supply of bombs are brought up from Tebessa on a truck and the 58th is able to expand its mission. (14:71) At this point, every piece of equipment is essential. The men of the 58th have to pick up the fuel at the train station and transport it to the field in trucks. Twelve to fifteen thousand gallons of fuel, in British square five-gallon cans and American fifty-five gallon drums, is handled can-by-can by the men of the 58th. (14:71)

Although supplies are limited the 58th continues to fly combat missions out of Thelepte. "One and two ship patrols are conducted to give cover to supply trains." (14:71) A two ship mission is used to cover a French troop movement while a four ship is sent to strike three truck-trailers that contain ammunition. (14:70) The single ship is in friendly territory, the two ship is near the battle area, and the four ship is behind enemy lines. Any mission involving more than one airplane often encountered radio problems. The radios in the P-40 were poor and sometimes did not work at all because of supply problems. On many missions, it was not uncommon for a pilot not to talk to anyone for the entire mission. (23:--) This did not hinder operations or tactics though, because Lt. Col. Momyer had insisted on strict radio discipline, and even when the radios worked they were only to be used in case of an emergency. Even start, taxi, and takeoff were made radio out. (20:--) However, it was necessary to use the radios when conducting certain close air support missions.

When close air support was required, the squadron would be briefed on the forward line of our troops the night before the mission, and bomb just ahead of that line the next day. Sometimes the line would move and friendly troops would be bombed. To solve this problem, a P-40 radio was put on a jeep and driven to the front line. The pilots would then talk to the person on the ground and find out where the line actually was. (23:--) The pilots were also able to give valuable information to the ground commanders. (15:22) This solved the problem of bombing friendly troops, but the problem of getting parts to keep the radios working remained.

In Casablanca, the 59th had put five planes together with parts from planes damaged during the invasion. The pilots used these rebuilt planes to maintain their flying skills. Each pilot would get to fly for about one hour each day. This was valuable training for the pilots while they were waiting to be sent to the front lines. On January 6, the 59th started toward Thelepte and by January 9 the flight and air echelons of the 59th were in Thelepte. It had been

two months since the landing at Morocco and the final supplies, personnel, and planes of the 33rd Fighter Group were finding their way to the front. Up to this point, the two months supply brought from the states had kept the squadron going.

The 59th began to pick up some of the flying missions and it did not take them long to prove their ability. Late in the afternoon, on January 15, a flight of ten JU-88's, with an escort of German Messerschmitts (ME-109's), dropped their bombs on the field. Captain Boone took off while the bombs were dropping. The people on the ground saw Boone's plane emerge from the smoke and dust. It roared after the JU-88's with full throttle and the boost on. Lt. Smith got off right after Boone and Major Hubbard, who was in the air on patrol, along with Lt. Beggs followed Smith. The JU-88's disappeared over a hill with Boone on their tail. An explosion was then heard coming from the other side of the hill. (23:--) Boone and Smith had caught up with the enemy bombers. "Smith was too eager and started firing from way out of range, but had enough speed to catch and knock down one plane." (13:22) Boone calmly swerved in and shot down one bomber, then moved over and shot another bomber, setting it on fire. It crashed into another JU-88 giving Boone a third kill. He then used his remaining ammunition to shoot down one more bomber. (13:22) Boone had shot four of the JU-88's down. He then, out of ammunition, tried to fly the others into the ground. (15:20) He returned to the field without a bullet hole in his plane. Major Hubbard bagged two JU-88's, Lt. Beggs got one, Lt. Smith got one, the French got one, and the anti-aircraft fire got one for a total of ten. (15:20) All the German bombers of this force were knocked out of the sky on the second anniversary of the creation of the 33rd Fighter Group. Captain Boone received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his efforts and the unit received the Distinguished Unit Citation for its actions.

The unit had a successful day with Boone's quadruple kill, but there would be other days when the squadron would not do as well. The pilots "were running into larger forces of German planes, and paying the price". (13:25) On February 2, a reconnaissance mission consisting of six planes was flying in the area south of Maknassy when it encountered a much superior force. The Luftwaffe formation of over thirty-five Stuka dive bombers (JU-87's) and ME-109's proved to be a formidable foe. Only one P-40 returned to home base safely. Three pilots were lost and two crash landed away from the base. On the same day, Lt. Smith was shot down on another mission. (15:24) Single ships and small formations could cover more area, but when the massive Luftwaffe formations were encountered, the

single ship tactics only worked for a short period of time. The P-40 was slower than the ME-109, so it was difficult to leave the fight at will. (23:--) The best tactic to overcome the larger formations was mutual support. The Allies had more air power assets than the Germans, but they were dispersed. The ground commanders did not want to lose the air power dedicated to them, so the Allies were unable to mass their air forces. Because of this, the pilots had to rely on the single ship or small formation tactics.

Major Cochran believed P-40 pilots should not try to climb or dive with an ME-109. The P-40's should stay together, nipping the ME-109's as they dive (14:89). This tactic is reinforced by Lt. Col. Momyer who, when describing the best maneuver to use when dog-fighting with ME-109's, said, "We consistently used a tight turn and tried to fight under 10,000 feet. We never tried to climb or dive." (17:12) The ME-109's were faster then the P-40 and could out climb or dive a P-40, so they could enter or leave the flight whenever they wanted. Because of this speed advantage, number four in a standard formation was always at risk. An ME-109 could sneak up and shoot him down before anyone saw it coming. As a result, the formation was altered. Formations were flown line abreast with number two stacked high, three and four stacked low. If a mission contained four four ship formations, you had sixteen airplanes line abreast. This provided better visual look out and quicker reactions to the enemy attacks. (23:--)

During the latter part of January and the early days of February, the group was used to train units that were going to replace them. (12:--) The 33rd, short of new pilots and down to thirteen aircraft, had to be relieved in the midst of intense operations. (2:131) They began to pull out of Thelepte in early February. The last members of the unit pulled out of Thelepte on February 9, 1943. A short time later the Germans made a successful thrust through Faid Pass and Gafsa. (12:--) The unit had withstood thirty-six bombing and straffing attacks in twenty days, but now the Germans occupied Thelepte. (14:93) Supplies were also lost in the evacuation. "What could not be moved was destroyed: 60,000 gallons of aviation gas were poured out; rations blown up; eighteen aircraft, of which five were nonreparable, burned." (2:156)

Just north of Thelepte, the Germans defeated the Allied forces and broke through the Kasserine Pass. Although it caused the evacuation of Thelepte, the victory did not last for long. The Allied ground forces, supported by artillary and air power, pushed the Germans back through Kasserine Pass. (2:160) Orders came to move back to Thelepte, but

instead of going into old dugouts and living quarters, the group was diverted to Sbeitla. Again the 33rd found itself at the most forward field in Tunisia. On their second night there, they were told to be ready to evacuate within ten minutes warning. A few days later, additional Allied forces changed the picture and all felt reasonably secure. (12:--)

In Morocco, the planes of the 58th Fighter Group were given to the more experienced 33rd Fighter Group to replace the ones that had been lost. Some of the replacement pilots were also distributed to the 33rd. While the replacements waited in Morocco, they continued to train. Major Cochran stopped in on his way back to the United States and briefed the replacements on what to expect from the German pilots and the best tactics to use. This was some of the best training the replacements would receive, because when they arrived at the front, they were given one local orientation flight and then sent on a mission. (20:--)

The various Allied air units in Tunisia started working together after the defeat at Kasserine Pass and this resulted in allied air superiority. "Our pilots were beginning to knock down large numbers of German planes." (13:26) The 33rd continued to operate in Tunisia moving to Ebba Ksour on April 12. On May 8, Tunis and Bizerte fell and May 13, all organized resistance in North Africa ceased. The day before resistance ceased, Eddie Richenbacher flew in and gave a spirited talk. One of the things he said was, "You might just as well start learning Italian now. Italy, however won't last three months. I just isn't in her blood to take punishment." (13:30)

Chapter Six

PANTELLERIA, SICILY, AND ITALY

Tunisia had fallen, but the war was far from over. The next objective would be to take Italy, but Pantelleria and Sicily stood in the way. (See Figure 1) Pantelleria is a small island just to the east of Tunisia. If Pantelleria could be defeated by the Allies, it could be used as a stepping stone to Sicily. Operations out of Pantelleria would aid in the defeat of Sicily, which would provide the final stepping stone in the path across the Mediterranean Sea to Italy.

By May 20, 1943, the 33rd was well established at Menzel Timime, Tunisia. There were no special problems with the living conditions at this point. Filtered and chlorinated water was obtained from the Army Engineers and fresh frozen meats were part of the diet two or three times a week. (13:30) But there was little time to sit back and enjoy the nice surroundings and salt water swimming. The pilots and planes worked from dawn until dusk to help bomb the island of Pantelleria into submission. Within a month, Allied forces were on the island of Pantelleria and all the air echelons of the 33rd were moved to the island by ship. (13:32) The planes arrived shortly after the air echelons and, by the end of June, the 33rd was flying strafing and dive bombing attacks to soften up Sicily for an invasion. (4:338)

On July 9, the invasion of Sicily began and the 33rd flew many missions to support the 3rd Division and Combat Command A of the 2nd Armored Division. Although there was heavy opposition at first, after July 13, the German Luftwaffe had all but disappeared, and unit operations slowed considerably. (4:338) The 33rd was in Licata, Sicily by the end of July. Major John A. Woodworth wrote, "On August 17, thirty-nine days after the invasion began, the American 7th Army entered Messina and all organized resistance in Sicily ended. However, troops and equipment continued to pour into the Licata docks and we all felt certain that Italy would soon be invaded." (13:35) The 33rd spent several months in Licata in comparative inactivity, and then moved to Termini Sicily. (11:--) From here, the 33rd supplied air cover for the invasion of Italy. (4:338)

The invasion began on September 9, and by September 13, the 33rd was working out of Italy. The Group had moved to Paestum, near Salerno, Italy. "At Paestum, the Group was subjected to the worst air raids that it had seen since leaving Thelepte, Tunisia." (4:339) "For the first three weeks, it was a dull day when enemy planes didn't make at least four attacks during the day and one or more at night." (11:--) The Group flew strafing and dive bombing missions in close support of Allied ground troops and provided escort for bombers. When the Anzio invasion began on January 22, 1944, the Group flew patrols over the beachhead and over the convoy lane from Naples. The 33rd continued to fly in this area of Italy until the unit moved to India. (4:339) "Orders to change Theaters of Operations came early in February." (11:--)

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSIONS

The North African Campaign achieved what it set out to do. By opening a second front in the war, it took pressure off of the Russians and prevented the Germans from linking up with the Japanese in India. It also kept the valuable resources in the Middle East away from the Germans and provided the time necessary for the allies to put together the cross channel invasion that would eventually win the war.

The 33rd Fighter Group was assigned a large task in this operation and rallied to the call. The unit distinguished itself many times in many ways. One of the most important things the 33rd did was to provide many valuable lessons to be learned by future warriors who may someday find themselves in the same situation. Three of the areas worth reviewing are training, logistics and tactics. The 33rd was faced with many problems and had to overcome several obstacles in each of these areas.

Realistic training was very helpful to the initial cadre of the 33rd. Practicing to operate out of bare base facilities in the United States proved valuable when faced with the real situation. Organizing the Group so it could move quickly and effectively was realistic training. However, replacements were not trained well and there was little time in combat to give them the additional training required. The United States was producing pilots faster than airplanes, so there was a back log of pilots sitting in Morocco and Egypt with no planes. It would have been better to take more time to train the pilots correctly in the United States and match pilot training output to the production of airplanes. This would provide a more experienced and survivable replacement pilot.

In the area of logistics, the 33rd was faced with the problem of deploying to an unknown destination to work out of unknown facilities for an unknown amount of time. The key lesson to be learned from the 33rd is that good planning is essential. The 33rd planned to have heavy initial loses so they had replacements available in the form of the Joker

Squadron. They assumed the worst, and planned to have to work out of a bare base facility, so they took everything necessary to keep them going for two months. During the initial invasion of Morocco, they were able to conserve resources because of the easy defeat of the French. Once in North Africa, the 33rd found itself spread out all across the continent with three squadrons working out of facilities offering different levels of support. The 58th at a bare base facility at Thelepte, the 60th in a fair facility at Youks-Les-Bains, and the 59th in a good facility at Casablanca. Excellent planning made it possible for the unit to operate effectively from all three locations. When the 59th was forced to turn their airplanes over to the French, they did not sit back and wait for replacements to come. They put five P-40's together from damaged airplanes and continued to fly. This kind of ingenuity helped compensate for the lack of a good supply line. Ingenuity also made it possible for the 58th to keep their planes flying at the front. With no supply personnel at the front, the 58th personnel carried needed fuel and oil from the trains to the planes by truck. The bottom line is, in war assume you will get no supplies and plan for it. If you need something you do not have, don't give up, use your ingenuity.

In the area of tactics, the 33rd proved once again that no one tactic will work in all situations. The best way to prevail in war is to know your enemy's ability and know how to deal with it. The pilots of the 33rd learned quickly not to climb or dive with the ME-109's and formations were altered because of the speed of the ME-109. Another important lesson to be learned is that of mutual support. It is better to coordinate the available forces and work together for a common goal than to work individually. More ground can be covered by sending one plane to patrol here and two to cover there, but a formation of ME-109's will usually prevail over a single P-40. Once the Luftwaffe strength was in position, it moved up and down the battle front, concentrating when and where it wished against Allied air units. (8:8) At the Casablanca conference held in January of 1943, it was recommended that American and British air units be organized according to their functions, tactical requirements, and logistics capabilities, regardless of nationality. (8:9) The recommendation was not acted on until February 1943, when the Americans suffered a major defeat at the Kasserine Pass. Allied aircraft outnumbered available Axis aircraft, but local force ratios always favored the enemy because the Allied air forces could not mass in time to concentrate their efforts against the enemy assault. (5:145) After the recommendation was acted on and the air units started working together, air

superiority was achieved in Tunisia. This helped the Allies win a critical victory. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commanding General of American Forces in the European Theater of Operations, wrote:

> The new administrative and operational organization successfully solved one of the basic problems of modern warfare--how to apply air power most effectively to the support of land operations. Direct support of ground troops is naturally the method preferred by the immediate military commander concerned, but this needs to be supplemented by assaults on the enemy's bases, on his lines of communication, and on his factories, which are beyond the immediate range of local commander's vision.
>
> The problem in a given operation is further complicated by the competing demands of individual commanders on a far-flung battlefront each of whom would naturally like to have at his disposal some segment of the Air Forces for his exclusive use. To a large extent in our experience the creation of separate strategic and tactical forces resolved the conflict between the immediate needs of the commander for direct air support, and equally compelling necessity of knocking out the enemy's war potential far behind his lines; but, perhaps the greatest advantage of our new organization was its flexibility. Aircraft of the different combat formations could be fused in a single mission as the need arose, and as a result the local commander had for direct support the combined weight of the strategic and tactical forces when he most needed it. (8:15)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. AERIAL VICTORIES OF THE 33rd FIGHTER GROUP

33rd Fighter Group	
Brown, Robert G.	1
Horton, Franklin W.	1
+Momeyer, William W.	8
Stetson, Loring F. Jr.	1

58th Squadron	
Abbott, Hershell	1
Baleski, John J. Jr.	1
Ballew, John	1
Bent, John T.	1
Bishop, Lynn	1
Bland, John W.	1
Bounds, Carson W.	1
+Bradley, John L.	3
+Chase, Levi R.	2
Cochran, Philip G.	2
Davidson, Denver B.	1
Davis, William R. Jr.	1
Day, Harry L. Jr.	1
Duncan, Charles H.	4.5
Fackler, Robert F.	1
Garbarino, Joseph A.	1
Goulait, Bert J.	1
Gray, James W. Jr.	4
Harris, Howard R.	1
Hasfiry, Johnie V.	1
Kantner, Robert P.	1
Partee, Lloyd W.	1
Poillion, Charles B.	2
Powell, Millard S.	1
Shelton, William M.	1
Skipper, Jack	2
Thomas, Tom A. Jr.	3
Thompson, Lassiter	2
Watkins, Alton O	1
Wilson, Harold M.	2
Wirth, Donald J.	1
Woodward, Nathan L.	1

59th Squadron	
Bach, John V.	1
Beggs, Carl L.	1
Boone, Carmon B.	4
+Bradley, John L.	2*
Byrne, Bernard R.	1
Campbell, Douglas H. Jr.	1
Campbell, Robert C.	1
Faver, Wilfred L.	1
Hubbard, Mark E.	4
Lamb, Thomas J.	1
Makely, John C.	1
Moyer, Harry A.	1
Neely, Gray	1
Nightingale, George W.	1
Posey, Eldon E.	1
Raddin, James H.	1
Scholl, Walter Jr.	2
Smith, Robert H.	1
Stewart, Glenn E.	2
Tobin, Edward J.	1
Tyler, Morgan S.	3
Watts, Blanchard K.	3

60th Squadron	
+Chase, Levi R.	8*
Cross, Willard D.	1
Erwin, George R.	1
Hanson, Stanley K.	1
Hemphill, Robert C.	2
Linn, James D.	1
Lovette, James K.	1
Matuch, George Jr.	1
McBride, William P.	1
McMills, Phil R.	2
Moses, Edwin J.	1
Neal, George S.	2
Rathbun, Daniel B.	1
Rice, John D.	1
Scidmore, Kenneth B.	1
Stech, Leroy A.	1
VanRossum, Clarence B. Jr.	2

NOTES:

- Asterisks indicate individuals listed in more than one place.

- Plus sign indicates Aces.

- Data from USAF Historical Study Number 85. (101:85)

APPENDIX B. PILOTS LOST, NOVEMBER 1942 - FEBRUARY 1944

Name	Date Reported Missing or Killed
2nd Lt. Kenneth E. Smith	unknown
2nd Lt. Marvin E. Carpenter	unknown
Lt. James D. Holloway	unknown
2nd Lt. James D. Jones	11 November 1942
Lt. Rufus R. McLeod	6 December 1942
Lt. Perry F. Bowser	7 December 1942
Lt. Daniel C. Bennlweg	23 December 1942
Lt. Edwin D. Burwell	4 January 1943
Major William Roodenburg	11 January 1943
Lt. Richard R. Cuthberth	14 January 1943
Lt. Alton O. Watkins	15 January 1943
Lt. Robert E. Okey	16 January 1943
Lt. Carson W. Baunels	30 January 1943
Lt. Harvey J. Cibel	31 January 1943
Lt. Shirley E. Gardner Jr.	31 January 1943
Captain Carmon B. Boone	2 February 1943
2nd Lt. Henry Dise Jr.	2 February 1943
2nd Lt. Harry E. French	2 February 1943
2nd Lt. William W. Johnson	2 February 1943
2nd Lt. Robert H. Smith	2 February 1943
2nd Lt. Charles E. King	29 March 1943
2nd Lt. Robert B. Smith	6 July 1943
2nd Lt. George C. Powell	13 July 1943
2nd Lt. John T. Banks Jr.	14 August 1943
2nd Lt. William J. Ford	14 August 1943
2nd Lt. William C. Kittinger	14 August 1943
2nd Lt. Charles G. Frank	13 September 1943
Major Glenn H. Crast	15 September 1943
2nd Lt. Herman D. Coley	4 November 1943
2nd Lt. William H. Bishop	22 January 1944
2nd Lt. Robert W. Reed	23 January 1944
Lt. Gail C. Ballard	26 January 1944

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